

Recommended Books 2005

Fiction

Ciment, Jill. [The Tattoo Artist](#). Pantheon Books

When successful 1920's New York artist Sara Ehrenreich and her not-so-talented husband Philip decide to take a job traveling the South Seas in search of carved masks, they run into serious problems with the inhabitants of one island and become forever changed.

Doctorow, E. L. [The March](#). Random House

March tells the story of Sherman's march through Georgia and the Carolinas through a shifting perspective including that of Sherman, his troops, and characters whose paths cross with Sherman's army.

Erdrich, Louise. [The Painted Drum](#). HarperCollins

While working in her estate sales business, Faye Travers comes across an old and valuable Ojibwe drum. Rather than sell it, she goes about researching and returning it to its North Dakota reservation home.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. [Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close](#). Houghton Mifflin

Blunt, brilliant, nine-year-old Oskar is on a quest. His father, killed on September 11 in the World Trade Center, has left a key behind. The precocious Oskar is determined to scour New York to find the key's purpose.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. [Never Let Me Go](#). Knopf

Kathy and the other students at the elite Hailsham School in England are part of a special group whose true purpose is kept from them. What the sheltered children are not told is that they are clones, and they exist purely supply organ donations. Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

Krauss, Nicole. [The History of Love](#). W.W. Norton & Co.

Complex and intriguing novel featuring retired locksmith Leo Gursky who wonders if anyone will remember him after his death. His ability to remain unnoticed helped him escape the Nazis as a young boy, but now Leo tries to be noticed in order to leave an impression.

Levy, Andrea. [Small Island](#). Picador

A novel of race and colonialism set in post-war London, Levy manages to create realistically

flawed characters that try to fit in with a changing world and sometimes fail miserably. Winner of the Orange and Whitbread prizes.

McCarthy, Cormac. No Country for Old Men. Knopf

McCarthy presents a new western in which a hunter stumbles on a drug deal gone bad, makes a quick decision, and is forced to run. He's pursued by a few really scary and relentless bad guys as well as by the seasoned sheriff who is concerned about the missing hunter.

McEwan, Ian. Saturday. Doubleday

McEwan describes one day in the life of a London surgeon, but it's no ordinary day. A simple altercation after a minor traffic accident changes a relaxing Saturday into an unexpected nightmare.

Miller, Sue. Lost in the Forest. Knopf Publishing Group

Story of love and loss set in California's wine country. Miller deals beautifully with a variety of emotions experienced by this troubled family as they go through a divorce, a remarriage, a death, and adolescent troubles.

See, Lisa. Snow Flower and the Secret Fan. Random House

Lily is fortunate to have perfectly bound feet and a friend she is bound to for life. She and Snow Flower share all their thoughts using secret women's writing on a fan they pass to each other through servants. Changing circumstances and misunderstandings affect their friendship as they marry and raise their own families.

Simon, Scott. Pretty Birds. Random House

When a Muslim teenager in Sarajevo and her family are driven from their home, Irena trades her school days for life working in a brewery that is actually a cover for the sniper team she joins. Simon is an NPR correspondent who actually met one such sniper and has filled his novel with rich realistic detail.

Smith, Zadie. On Beauty. Penguin Press

Academic rivalries, interracial families, extramarital affairs, class issues and identity struggles all play major roles in Zadie Smith's new novel. Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

Non-Fiction

Berendt, John. The City of Falling Angels. Penguin Group

Author of Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil, Berendt turns his eye and considerable talents to Venice. Berendt's book is more than travel writing. He captures the essence of Venice through its quirky citizens as he examines an arson investigation.

Croke, Vicki. Lady and the Panda. Random House

1930's socialite Ruth Harkness didn't let dire straits get her down. After her explorer husband's sudden death and the discovery of her penury, Ruth picked up where he left off and set out on an expedition to be the first to capture a live panda and transport it to the West.

Didion, Joan. The Year of Magical Thinking. Alfred A. Knopf

Didion's husband died of a sudden heart attack as her daughter lay seriously ill in the hospital.

This memoir follows Didion through her first year of grief as she struggles to help her daughter while sorting through her own anguished emotions.

Friedman, Thomas L. The World is Flat. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux

Friedman focuses on globalization, discussing technology that makes the world flat by connecting diverse groups of individuals who can collaborate and compete on an international scale. Friedman discusses how terrorists use technology to attack in the same way businesses use it to compete.

Gladwell, Malcolm. Blink: the power of thinking without thinking. Little, Brown & Co.

How we make snap judgments and how we can train ourselves to make more discerning quick judgments form the basis of Blink. Gladwell uses entertaining style and real-life scenarios to discuss how quickly decisions are actually made and how marketers can use that information to appeal to consumers.

Greenhouse, Linda. Becoming Justice Blackmun. Times Books

Based on the personal and official papers of Justice Blackmun, this biography focuses, in part, on his longtime friendship with Chief Justice Warren Burger. Greenhouse uses a number of sources including entries from Blackmun's elementary school diary to draw a comprehensive picture.

Harr, Jonathan. The Lost Painting: The Quest for a Caravaggio Masterpiece. Random House

In 1992, an art student discovered a clue as to the location of a lost painting that had been missing for 200 years. Harr traces the painting's history, its recovery and its restoration.

Levitt, Steven D, and Stephen J. Dubner. Freakonomics. William Morrow

Levitt and Dubner apply behavioral economics to real world issues. They show how drug gangs have a structure similar to many corporations and how parents' expectations for their children affect how they name them. Highly unusual look at economics.

McCullough, David. 1776. Simon & Schuster

This time, biographer and Pulitzer winner McCullough focuses on one year. McCullough discusses the tactics, will, and luck that allowed an unskilled militia to win the war for independence.

Packer, George. The Assassins' Gate : America in Iraq. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Packer traces the roots of the Iraq war, discusses the arguments that led to it, the divisions within the administration, how the war was conducted, and its effect on the Iraqi people.

Seth, Vikram. Two Lives. HarperCollins

Memoir of Seth's great aunt and uncle, Shanti and Henny. The stories were drawn from interviews with 86 year old Shanti and on Henny's letters found in the attic after her death. Interesting look at two lives changed and bonded by World War II.

Walls, Jeannette. The Glass Castle. Scribner

Walls discusses growing up with unconventional parents who end up homeless by choice so they are unencumbered by material possessions. In Walls' family, the children were left to their own devices in order to become resourceful, pets weren't fed so that they didn't become dependent,

and the children were the victims of bullying and poverty.

RA staff
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